



DIGITAL ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP AT HARVARD

Kota Language

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
[Please share](#) how this access benefits you. Your story matters.

Citation	Wolf, Richard. 2012. Kota language. In Encyclopedia of the Nilgiri Hills, ed. Paul Hockings, 495-501. New Delhi: Manohar and Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Pres.
Accessed	February 19, 2015 10:52:13 AM EST
Citable Link	http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:9894542
Terms of Use	This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA

(Article begins on next page)

Kota language

Note: In the following, Kota verbs are presented in the following form:

S¹- (S²-) = future stem- (past/simple present stem-) in accordance with the Dravidian Etymological Dictionary

Identification

Kota belongs to the South Dravidian branch of the Dravidian language family, a branch which includes the major languages Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada. Kota and its closest neighbor, Toda, have been identified as a Nilgiri subgroup of the South Dravidian branch. Kota and Toda separated from the dominant language of the area (Pre-Tamil) sometime before the appearance of the first extant Tamil texts (about 2,000 years ago). The evidence rests primarily on a phonological shift, palatalization of *k- before front vowels, which eventually spread over the entire Tamil area. (The asterisk denotes what linguists believe formed part of proto-Dravidian. Palatalization means the place in which the consonant is articulated has shifted from the back of the throat to the roof of the mouth.) For example, in Tamil, the verb “to do,” *cey*, is believed to have evolved from **key*. In modern Kannada, *key*, *kai*, and *gey* are related terms. In Kota, the verb “to do” or “make” is *gey-* (*gec-*). (See DEDR 1957). The argument that Kota is more closely related to Tamil than to Kannada rests on the fact that Kota and Tamil have exclusive forms in common: a variant of the future suffix in Sangam Tamil (see Subrahmanyam 1991) and the prohibitive.

Local classification

Kotas term their language *Kō mānt* (Kota language), *amd mānt* (our language) or more often simply *mānt* (language). *Mānt* also refers to parts of the language, such as a proverb, or even a single word or phrase, as in *māmūl mānt* (“traditional” word, usually one out of currency). Kotas refer to differences in dialect, usage, or vocabulary by region or age of speaker by the term *mānt* as well. *Kaṇmār mānt*, lit. “word change language,” refers to deliberate attempts by one group of language users to exclude others. Kotas will speak of someone next to them, say a Tamil who knows a few words in Kota, using *karg* or *ekl* (lit. “scratching”) as a term of reference—not without some humor. Some of these words enter and depart from the vocabulary with great frequency. In 1997, young men were calling alcoholic beverages “response tea” (*badl ṭi*). Older members of the community use this “word change language” to exclude youngsters in ways comparable to those of English-speaking parents when they spell words like “cookie” so as not to arouse the interest of a child.

Variations

Not surprisingly, each village has its own *mānt* as well. Kolmēl *mānt* has been the standard for most linguistic work on the Kota language because it was the home of K. Sulli, M. B. Emeneau’s principal informant. The *mānt* spoken in Ticgār village may be Badaga influenced in the prevalence of “b” in verbal forms where “v” would predominate in Kolmēl *mānt*; this awaits systematic treatment. Similarly, the *mānts* of Kalāc and Kurgōj villages feature placement of a

nasal before certain intervocalic palatals and dentals. He/she came, *vaduko* in Kolmēl, becomes *vanduko*; *pījl* (bamboo jews harp) becomes *pīnjl*.


Unlike Todas, Kotas do not recognize a separate language of songs. However, certain features of Kota language appear differently in sung and spoken forms. Spoken Kota features consonant clusters, e.g. *pabtk* (“to the festival”), which are treated as consonants-plus-vowels in a song, e.g. *pa bu tu ku*. (the vowel “u” is just an approximation of the intervening sound, which falls between “u” and “i”). Songs also feature calls of one woman to a group of women, using verb forms that end in “go.” While such forms are not absent in everyday speech, they occur with greater regularity in women’s songs.

Typical forms and intonation


Two question types exist in Kota, as in English. One is answerable “yes” or “no” and one requires further explanation. Questions of the former type are indicated by a raised intonation at the end of the utterance and sometimes by a change in vowel. For example, when a man looks as if he has set out to leave the village, to go to Ooty for example, his friend may ask,


“kārḍvī”?

“Have you set out”? This is grammatically the same as the simple past, “you set out,” and distinguishable only by intonation. The man may reply, simply, “yes,” or “yes I am setting out.”


ā ā::: kārḍvē

When the man returns, suppose a child asks “where did you come from?” The child will use a second person plural ending to the past stem *S*² and add an /ɪ/ at the end. This rhyming ending isn’t necessary to make this a question, since “from where” /eytr/ is the question word, but in practice questions tend to end with long vowels. The possible intonations of this kind of question require further study. Provisionally, it seems that the intonation may be raised, and accent placed, either on the question word, or on the final syllable. This emphasis may have to do with whether one is focusing on the “from where” part of the question, or the person who is being addressed.


eytr vadvīmī?

In all likelihood, the child would have added an appropriate kinship term of address, /aṇṇē/ elder brother, or /māmō/ “maternal uncle,” probably at the end of the utterance. The answer to this, naturally, is “I came from such and such a place.” (Let us ignore the question of whether or not it is appropriate for a child to ask an elder from where he has just arrived).

A subcategory of the second question type is one that narrators use to motivate episodes in a tale or description of events. “So what happened after he went to the fields. . .,” the narrator continues. The listener is not expected to answer at this point. The intonation of such questions

may include a rise at the end, as in those abovementioned, but they also may descend in pitch.

Intermediate clauses are usually distinguished with intonational contours, often a slight rise and fall, ending on a medial pitch. Ends of utterances that are not questions tend to be at the lowest relative pitch level. More details concerning form and intonation are taken up in the context of the following story.

A story excerpt and analysis

M. B. Emeneau provided extensive examples of Kota in his *Kota Texts*, which consisted of stories and ritual descriptions narrated by K. Sulli. The following story from the present author's fieldwork supplements those in Emeneau's publications, which were not tape recorded in performance. In addition to basic grammatical structures and rhetorical uses, it shows regional *mānt* differences, incorporation of English and Tamil, and the role of listeners at the speech event. The story belongs to the well known Nilgiri genre of stories about Kurumbas.

The story has been broken up into five sections for discussion: I. Setting the storytelling frame; II. Establishing the scene; III. The Kurumba arrives; IV. Enter: the hero, Daḍuk brother. V. A final showdown. The descriptive titles are this writer's.

Date: 6/7/92

Location: Kolmēl village

Storyteller (speaker, unless otherwise marked): S. Cindamani (age: mid forties)

Interlocutor: R. Kamaṭṇ (RK)

Others present: Richard Wolf (referred to jocularly as Kolmēl Kamaṭṇ) (RW), and two or three unidentified Kotas

{ } = vowel or word fragment, in error, or filler sound.


(letter in Kota word) = sound dropped in rapid speech (sign not used in every instance).

% = sound made by placing tongue at roof of the mouth and sucking while pulling tongue away

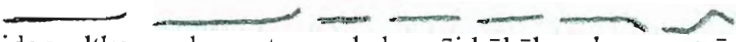
:::: = prolongation of vowel, semivowel, or consonant; number of ":" corresponds roughly to length.

Lines drawn above text indicate relative pitch level. Three basic pitch areas are indicated, low, medium, and high. These are approximate and await more precise frequency analysis.

I. Setting the storytelling frame

1.  id vatke, ān vatke, cindāmayṇe,

As for this, as for me, I'm Cindamani

2.  ide vadṭke, paykm vate, emde kurgōj kōkāl paykme. arcvī ġ (RK: cere)

As for this, as for the story, it is our (exclusive) Kurgoj village story, understand? (RK: OK)

3. ēnddke, kolmēle kamṭne, arcvīz [general laughing] ēndde. (RK: cere) [laughing]

Saying “e” [i.e. responding to the story with utterances of comprehension] is Kolmēl Kamaṭn, understand? Saying “e”!

4. alk akāltle engickmūro? (RK: ā) kolmēl kamṭā?

Then in those days, what did they do? (RK: uh huh) kolmēl kamṭā?

Discussion of I

1. The content and intonation of the following introductory utterances stem from the fact that this story was performed for the present writer. I did not actually act as a respondent, though called to do so, because I wished to observe the proper moments of response, which are noted here. The rather monotonous intonation in lines 1-3 appears to be a deliberate attempt to sound like south Indian announcements over loudspeaker. Perhaps such limited dynamics on the speaker's part are suited to poor microphone amplification systems. Here the effect was dramatic and humorous.

Uses Kurgōj variant of the participial form “having gone” (*vadt*), which is used in casual speech to mean “as for (me, it, that, etc.)” The Kolmēl version of this is *vadtḱ* and appears in line 2. Tamil has an equivalent construction, *vantu*. These are all fillers, preceding substantial speech.

2. Introduces the distinction in Kota between “our,” exclusive of the other speakers present, (emd) and “our,” inclusive of the other speakers present (amd). This is a story of Kurgōj village, not Kolmēl
3. Stories require listeners who make sounds indicating that they are listening. /ē/ represents this sound. /nd/ is a quotative participial. /ndd/ is a verbal noun. /ke/ is a dative suffix /k/, followed by its release /e/. /ēnddke/ means, literally, “for saying ‘ē’”.
4. /alk/, meaning “then,” is typically inserted in narrations to maintain a flow of speech; it does not necessarily mean, “and then such and such happened.”

The initial /a/ in /akāltle/ refers to distance in time; the same vowel can be used to indicate distance in space. Normally the vowel is long. Its opposite, indicating proximity, is /i/.

Rules for joining nouns with suffixes are similar to those in other Dravidian languages. Here “in [the] time [of]” is “time” /kālm/ + the locative suffix /l/. The final /m/ becomes /t/ in the oblique form of this noun (See Emeneau 1944-46 I: 23, §34). (Again the final /e/ is just the release of the /l/).

/engickmūro/: a typical framing phrase which means “what” + “they did” + “they [people] say [i.e., it is said that. . .]” = /en/ + /gicko/ + /mūro/

Responses of a listener tend to be a short nazalized /a/ sound, as it is here.
Characteristically Kota are two articulations of this sound in a row, the first one very short with a glottal stop, the second one longer. All these appear as “uh huh” in the translation.

Cindamani addresses the researcher /kolmēl kamtā/, using the ending /ā/ instead of using the third person ending /n/, as in line 3.

II. Establishing the scene

5. {a:} ay imbayt̥le (RK: cere meyme) kōvgūlelme im kāt̥r itvōre: (RK: ā)

There, in the buffalo grazing area (RK: OK auntie), Kotas were all driving buffaloes (RK: uh huh).

- 6 im kāt̥r ayk eṭ pate moggūl̥ im kāt̥re (RK: cere)

Grazing buffaloes were eight-ten boys, grazing buffaloes (RK: OK)

7. al andēl ā::yṭke (RK: ā), cer elā::me, al engicūrdartmeṭ piṭke sopkeṭ (RK: ā)

Then evening, having happened, (RK: uh huh), OK then what did they do? For food?

8. oylā::m āmnjūym eyt oyṭke, (RK: ā) arāṭk iṭke (RK: ā)

taking Ragi millet flour and going, putting [it] inside a pot

9. oylām verāmnjīṭ oylām toydṭk (RK: ā)

having mixed well the “piṭ” (grain cooked into a lump) made only of ragi.

10. {ā} toydṭke, alk venṇ venṇ kuy gicṭk iṭṭke (RK: cere meyme)

having mixed [it], then putting butter again and again into a concavity made [in the ragi ball]. (RK: OK auntie)

11. ayk kaln up iṭke (RK: cere meyme) ceryān tūn gicṭke (RK: cere meyme)

having put jaggery and salt in there (RK: OK auntie) having made it taste excellent (RK: OK auntie)

12. pepmī pālm(ī) (o)ylām tidtke (RK: cere meyme) ūrelām puļ āygōre (RK: ā ā:)
 having eaten curds and milk well (RK: OK auntie) they all became “full”
13. oylā::m tidō::re oyrō:re (RK: oyrōre) āvr anjā::r mūgūle (RK: moggūle)
 they ate well and slept (RK: they slept) they, five-six boys (RK: boys)

Discussion of II

5. It is polite to refer to elders by appropriate kinship terms; hence R. Kamaṭn often responds “OK auntie” /cere meyme/ rather than merely “OK.”

The ethnonym for Kota is /kōv/, /gūl/ is the plural suffix, /elm/ means “all.”

The verb “to watch, guard,” kāv- (kāt-) implies driving, grazing, etc. The past continuous tense is built as follows: S² (main verb) + continuous tense marker + S² (to be) + past marker + personal ending = kāt + r + it + v + ōr.

6. eight-ten is an idiom indicating an approximate group size and should not be taken literally.
7. The telling becomes animated here, with long vowels ā drawn out and rhetorical raised intonation on “what did they do,” and, “for food.” The form for “what did they do” uses the same /engicko/ construction discussed in line 4. To it is added the quotative verb participle /ird/, which becomes transformed into /ūrd/ when connected to the final /o/ of /engicko/. /artm/ means “meaning” and adds emphasis. Literally /engicūrdartme/ means “‘what did they do’ thus saying, it means?”

Piṭ is a cooked lump of ragi millet, or ragi mixed with rice, with the consistency of dough. It was traditionally the staple starch in the Kota diet. Together with /sop/ “greens” the phrase /piṭke sopke/ means “for food” in general.

8. In this series of actions, taking along (lit. having gone, taking) and putting, the forms are foreshortened compared to standard Kolmēl speech styles. Putting (or having put) is often expressed as S² + completion of action marker + emphatic marker = iṭ + ṭ + k(e). Here the completion of action marker is folded into the preceding /ṭ/, yielding /iṭke/; the same holds for /oyṭke/. This describes one of the forms labelled a “gerundial predication” by Emeneau (194-46 I: 20, §21)
9. A good example of contraction. ver (plain, unadorned, naked) + āminj (ragi millet) + piṭ (preparation of cooked grain in a lump) becomes /verāminjiṭ/. This dense dish contrasts with the kind of piṭ made by mixing ragi with well-cooked rice.


All kinds of piṭ must be cooked and mixed well with a thick stick in order to prevent stomach upset. “Having mixed well” here uses the standard form S² + completion of action marker + emphatic marker = toyd + t̄ + k

10. The repeated action of dripping butter into holes pressed into the ragi lump is indicated by reduplication of the word for butter /veṇ/ (See Emeneau 1944-46 I: 23, §29).. The doubling of /ṇ/ indicates that butter is a “farther goal” (Emeneau 1944-46 I: 22, §22) of the sentence, that is, the object of “to put.” The “nearer goal,” the hole, is the object of “to make” and is not marked.
11. /ceryān/ is the adjectival form of the word /cere/, “OK.” This adjectival form /-ān/ seems to derive from Tamil. /ceryān/ is a term of intensification, and doesn’t necessarily mean “excellent.” It could, for example, be used to mean “thorough” in “a thorough beating.”
12. A series of nouns is indicated by the construction noun(1) + m + ī + noun(2) + m + ī, etc. In speaking quickly, pālmī oylām was contracted to pālm̄lām. /elām/, “everyone,” is a Tamilized version of the Kota /elm/. The Tamil word is /ellām/.


/pul/ is the English word “full”; in this sentence, the /l/ is emphasized and held for a moment

13. This sentence is spoken in a characteristic singsong fashion, here marking the end of a structural section. Each of the words, descending slightly from word to word, oylā::m, tidō::re, and oyrḡō::re begins relatively hi, dips down smoothly in an arc, and briefly returns up. The contrast between Kurgōj mānt and Kolmēl mānt, or at least Cindamani’s and R. Kamaṭn’s speech habits, is apparent in the latter’s “correction” in his repetition of the word mūḡūḷe (boys), using a doubled /g/: /moggūḷe/ = /mog/ + /gūḷ/.

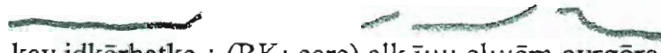
III. The Kurumba arrives

14.  anjār mūḡūḷ orkērām (a)ntkn kavṛ vadvōne. (RK: kavṛ vadvōne) kavṛ vadvōne.

As soon as the five or six boys were asleep, that’s it, [the] Kurumba came (RL: [the] Kurumba came). [the] Kurumba came.

15.  kavṛ vadōne pā::ym vadōne, vayrk vadōne, kay iṭōne. (D: cere)

[The] Kurumba comes, sloooooowly he comes, to the roof he comes, he puts his hand [on the roof and makes a little noise]

16.  { % } kay iḍkērbatke ḷ (RK: cere) alk ī::: el:::ām oyrḡōre. (RK: cere meyme)

{sound with tongue} at the moment of placing his hand. . . (RK: OK), at that time,

everyone [who was] here sleeps [i.e. had been sleeping] (RK: OK auntie)

17. ī elā::m al aynjīt mēkartvōre (RK: cereyme)

Everyone [who was] here then got scared and woke up (RK: OK auntie)

Discussion of III

14. This “as soon as” construction involves the suffix -ām (also used for conditional clauses). Probably S¹ + k + ēr (version of gerund for “to be”) + ām.

/antkn/ “that’s all” is used rhetorically to indicate the end of an action, a story, or someone’s death. Here it emphasizes the fact that the Kurumba was lying in wait for the boys to fall asleep. The drama of the Kurumba coming is further indicated by RK repeating the phrase “the Kurumba came” and Cindamani uttering it again.

15. The tense here changes to simple present (or perhaps a version of what Subrahmanyam calls “narrative past”; see below). This consist of S² + personal ending. It connotes, here, immediacy of action in the narration. The word for slowly, /pāym/, is drawn out, iconically reinforcing the slowness of the action it represents.

Subrahmanyam identifies in *Kota Texts* what he calls the “narrative past” (1991, 58-59), occurring only in the third person, and consisting of the past stem S² + 3rd personal suffixes + ē. The third personal Kota suffixes in general are of two kinds, one with /ā/ plus number and gender marker and one with /ō/ plus number and gender marker (Emeneau 1944-46, I:27 § 54). Focusing on the /ā/ version, Subrahmanyam notes that this form of the past tense is a “direct descendant of the 3rd person forms of the original [Tamil] past tense.” He also notes the consistency of the use of the declarative particle -ē at the end of these forms in Kota texts, and their absence in conversations represented in the texts.

The implication seems to be that an older grammatical construction is preserved in storytelling. This does not appear to be the case. The line under discussion shows that the vowel in this tense, whether we call it simple present or narrative past in this context, need not be /ā/. Here, vadōne pā::ym vadōne, vayrk vadōne, kay iṭōne, could just as easily have been vadāne pā::ym vadāne, vayrk vadāne, kay iṭāne. Furthermore, according to my consultant in 1992, the construction with -ā can be heard in ordinary speech, not only in stories, or narrations. The final -ē is optional and, as Emeneau noted, “may be added to any type of word” (Emeneau 1944-46, I:27 § 54).

16. The forthcoming reaction to the sound of Kurumba placing his hand on the roof is forshadowed by the sound Cindamani makes, indicated by %.

everyone [who was] here sleeps [i.e. had been sleeping] (RK: OK auntie)

17. ī elā::m al aynjīt mēkartvōre (RK: cereyme)

Everyone [who was] here then got scared and woke up (RK: OK auntie)

Discussion of III

14. This “as soon as” construction involves the suffix -ām (also used for conditional clauses). Probably S' + k + ēr (version of gerund for “to be”) + ām.

/antkn/ “that’s all” is used rhetorically to indicate the end of an action, a story, or someone’s death. Here it emphasizes the fact that the Kurumba was lying in wait for the boys to fall asleep. The drama of the Kurumba coming is further indicated by RK repeating the phrase “the Kurumba came” and Cindamani uttering it again.

15. The tense here changes to simple present (or perhaps a version of what Subrahmanyam calls “narrative past”; see below). This consist of S² + personal ending. It connotes, here, immediacy of action in the narration. The word for slowly, /pāym/, is drawn out, iconically reinforcing the slowness of the action it represents.

Subrahmanyam identifies in *Kota Texts* what he calls the “narrative past” (1991, 58-59), occurring only in the third person, and consisting of the past stem S² + 3rd personal suffixes + ē. The third personal Kota suffixes in general are of two kinds, one with /ā/ plus number and gender marker and one with /ō/ plus number and gender marker (Emeneau 1944-46, I:27 § 54). Focusing on the /ā/ version, Subrahmanyam notes that this form of the past tense is a “direct descendant of the 3rd person forms of the original [Tamil] past tense.” He also notes the consistency of the use of the declarative particle -ē at the end of these forms in Kota texts, and their absence in conversations represented in the texts.

The implication seems to be that an older grammatical construction is preserved in storytelling. This does not appear to be the case. The line under discussion shows that the vowel in this tense, whether we call it simple present or narrative past in this context, need not be /ā/. Here, vadōne pā::ym vadōne, vayrk vadōne, kay iṭōne, could just as easily have been vadāne pā::ym vadāne, vayrk vadāne, kay iṭāne. Furthermore, according to my consultant in 1992, the construction with -ā can be heard in ordinary speech, not only in stories, or narrations. The final -ē is optional and, as Emeneau noted, “may be added to any type of word” (Emeneau 1944-46, I:27 § 54).

16. The forthcoming reaction to the sound of Kurumba placing his hand on the roof is forshadowed by the sound Cindamani makes, indicated by %.

The “as soon as” construction here is formed similarly to the /-ām/ of line 15. It emphasizes the very moment, using the word /paṭ/, “time/moment,” which becomes /baṭ/ following /r/ (vowels and semivowels). /k/ is a dative suffix, “at the time of.” Hence the structure is S' + k + ēr (version of gerund for “to be”) + paṭ + k.

Cindamani intones her voice higher at this moment, raising the tension. Then she reminds the listener that, at this point, everyone is sleeping, drawing out /ī/ the word for “here” and emphasizing the /l/ in the word for everyone.

17. In repeating “everyone here” Cindamani shifts emphasis by drawing out the /ā/ in /elām/ and shortening the /ī/ and /l/, which she had emphasized in the previous line.

IV. Enter: the hero, Daḍuk brother.

18. al mēkaṭṭīle, alk ay:::, agguḷe, eṅk aṅ āko daḍuk aṅ irōne (RK: ā)

Then, when waking up. . . then, in that group, [there was a guy] who is called Daḍuk-elder-brother. He will be [is in the relationship of] elder brother to me. (RK: OK)

19. alk daḍuk aṅ alk oylām puḷ::: āyṛ oygōne (RK: cereyme)

At that time Daḍuk-elder-brother is sleeping soundly.

20. alk orkērām engickoī::: ay micm oḷōr ālgūḷ pūrām engicko daḍukaṅṅ paṭṭ oylām nuḷcōre. (RK: ā)

Then, while he was sleeping what did they do? Here, the rest of them, all the men, what did they do? They grabbed Daḍuk-elder-brother and pinched him hard! (RK: uh huh)

21. alk nuḷcīḷ endmūro, at:::e, ate tērāmū podn mū mūgūḷe iddārn vat nuḷcīmā vidḍī(i)r oygōnē vālne oyṭ terdvōne (RK: ā) (lots of general laughing)

Then, while he was being pinched, what'd he say, it is reported? “atte atte” [scolding sound], “son of a whore, son of a lung! who among you boys is coming and pinching me, let go!” Saying this he went, he went and opened the door (RK: uh huh).

22. daḍrā buḍrā ir oygōne vāln terdvōne (RK: ā)

Quickly (lit. saying “daḍrā buḍrā”) he went, he opened the door (RK: uh huh)

23. alk akavṛ engicdḷ viṭ::arḷde. alk pinm paṭvērde, imbayṭ toyk vat, kavṛ pūrām galāṭā gicde

(RK: ā)

Then what'd that Kurumba do? [He] went away quickly. Then, next, thinking "I've slept," he [Daḍuk-elder-brother] came to the buffalo-grazing-land pen, and made a quarrel with all the Kurumbas.

24. alk ad ōcīkū? (RK: ā)

Then that's gone [that part of the story is finished]?

Discussion of IV

18. /mēkaṛtīlle/ presents yet another construction for an action taking place at the time of another action, S² + īl̄.

The holding of /y/ in /ay/ indicates a break in the story, where Cindamani explains who Daḍuk is, and how she is related to him. This indicates he was of her generation (in classificatory terms, not age) and born in her exogamous division (*kēr*).

19. Sleeping soundly here is expressed with the English word "full" /puḷ/ which is stretched out with emphasis on the /l/ before adding the adverbial suffix āȳ.
20. This passage is spoken very rapidly. The extension of the vowel /ī/ connects the rhetorical question "what did they do" to the more elaborated version of the question explaining who "they" are. This series of words remains more or less at the same, somewhat raised, pitch level. Beginning with /daḍukaṇṇ/ Cindamani lowers the pitch slightly. The climax word of the line, "pinch" /nuḷ/, is accented with volume and slightly raised pitch.
21. alk nuḷcīl̄ endmūro, at::e, ate tērāmū podn mū mūgūle iddārn vat nuḷcīmā vidḍī(i)r oygōnē vālne oȳ terdvōne (RK: ā) (lots of general laughing)

Then, while he was being pinched, what'd he say, it is reported? "atte atte" [scolding sound], "son of a whore, son of a lung! who among you boys is coming and pinching me, let go!." Saying this he went, he went and opened the door (RK: uh huh).

The intensity of the previous line is increased here. Daḍuk's annoyance is expressed onomatopoeically with the hardness of the /t/ sound in /at::te/, used for scolding. Why "lung's son" is used as an insult is not clear. The question form "who is it [who performs action in some tense]" is a typical one: /id/ + /dār/ + /n/ = this + who + distant object marker. Daḍuk himself is the immediate goal of the verb "to pinch," but the goal of the sentence is to determine who did the pinching. In simpler sentences or clauses, "whose child is this?" /iddār mog/ or "whose wife is this?" /iddār veḍ/, the question word

“who” remains unmarked. The question form of the verb, in this context, where the questioner is addressing a group of likely suspect pinchers, is S² + 2nd person plural ending + question particle = /nuɭc/ + /im/ + /ā/. This contrasts with Tamil, for example, where the question word, e.g. “who” /yār/, would be sufficient without adding the /ā/, used in Tamil yes-no questions, to the end of the sentence.

/viḍḍi/ is an exclamation without a literal meaning, I was told, but it would seem to be related to the verb, “to leave” or “get rid of” viṭ- (viṭ-).

22. dāḍrā buḍrā in- is an onomapoetic form of the reduplicative type with change of vowel and initial consonant (See Emeneau 1969); this kind of “expressive with initial voiced stop,” in Tamil and Kota, is historically significant, in that it suggests that at least in this form-class (“expressives” or “onomatopoeia”) the pronunciation of initial voiced stops, e.g. /d/, may be very ancient, even though Tamil orthography only represents voiceless stops, e.g. /t/ (See Emeneau and Hart 1993).
23. This line is rather confusing because of the change in subject. The first rhetorical question is literally, “then, that Kurumba, what was [his] doing?” /engicd/, a gerund, is not conjugated with the personal ending of the Kurumba.

The answer, /viṭarcd/ was translated for me as “he left quickly.” It seems, however, that this construction means “making to leave.” The past stem of the verb “to leave” is added to a formative suffix that indicates outside causation and a gerund marker: S² + arc + d. That is to say, the Kurumba was chased off by Daḍuk. With this shift in emphasis implied by the verb, the listener understands that Daḍuk is the subject of the following clauses, even though the verbs are in gerund form and no subject is specified: “saying ‘I’ve slept,” “coming to the buffalo pen,” “making a quarrel with all the Kurumbas.”

24. Kota narrators demarcate sections of a story at many levels, in part to check that the listener is following. Sometimes the teller may ask questions along the way, making sure the listener knows to whom a particular pronoun refers, or what place is under discussion. The question form here is made by adding /ū/ to the past tense /ōciko/ “it’s gone” and raising the intonation on the final /ū/. Here, if the listener did not make a noise of assent, Cindamani would not have continued the story.

V. A final showdown

25. cerete punm alke, adē daḍuk anṇe, (RK: m) alk adē im kūcōne anmē::: pāldar pārtār
vadṭke (RK: m), anṇe tēlā:r vadōne (RK: m)

Thinking, “OK,” then next, that very Daḍuk-elder brother (RK: uh huh), shut in that very buffalo [that he puts in the pen every day], and just like that . . . [like he always does], having come to the [the place called] Pāldar Pārtār [which is about 3 kilometers uphill from the grazing land called mallār above Kurgōj village], he came to the forest area.

26. tēlār vadīlle kavṛ vadkmūro (RK: m)

When he reached the forest area the Kurumba came, so they say.

27. alk vadōne kal itōne (RK: ā) { % } daḍuk aṇṇe (RK: ā)

Then he came and threw a stone (RK: uh huh). { Sound with tongue } at Daḍuk elder brother.

28. { a } daḍuk aṇṇe alke kal itām daḍuk engicōne ḷ oḍ kaṭ kacṭ āḍvōne (RK: ā) oṛkaṭle (RK: cere meyme)

Then when [the Kurumba] threw the rock at Daḍuk-elder-brother, what does Daḍuk do? He kept on knot tied (RK: uh huh) around [his] waist (RK: OK auntie)

29. akaṭ engicḷ kavṛ vadko kavṛ vadko irr cuytide oṛkaṭā::r oṛkaṭāre (RK: a kaṭṭe) ā::

What did that knot do? Saying, “a Kurumba has come, a Kurumba has come,” [the knot] circled around and around [Daḍuk’s] waist. (RK: that knot?) yes.

30. tērāmeyṇ nī entik vat galātāv gicī?

“Son of a whore, you [dare to] come near me and make trouble?”

31. āne enne ackātik muṇjkkō? (RK: ā) vāṇa pāklā rōne, iyaṇ payk vate cēydkō (RK: ā)

I . . . “can you even budge me? Come let’s see,” he said, [and then] this elder brother came and reached home.

32. alk id ore kadaingo

Then this is one story

Discussion of V.

25. This quotative refers to what the actor thought rather than literally said. The difference between thinking and saying is not usually marked.

The extended vowel sounds on /anmē::/ and /tēlā::r/ follow the contours described in line 13: the words begin slightly raised, descend in a shallow arc, and rise slightly at the end. Note the balance in sound in this sentence: two /adē/s, two /anmē/s, and two singsong vowel extensions. The distribution of these repeated features is such that each means something slightly different.

“That very Daḍuk-elder brother” may be emphasized because of the ambiguity of subject created in line 23, or perhaps simply because the speaker has demarcated the end of one section of the story and wants to make clear who the actor is in the next section. The use of the simple present/narrative past here, combined with the use of “that very buffalo” /adē im/ and “like that” /anmē/ (the first time) conveys the idea that shutting that particular buffalo in the pen is a habitual action, performed on this as any other day. The second /anmē/ could be translated as “in the manner of” [having performed these various chores]. Important is the “forest,” and not the “manner,” in this final phrase, since the forest is generally the site of Kurumba attacks.

The suffix /-ār/ refers to area or region. Rather than say “he reached the forest,” Kotas say “he reached the forest area,” perhaps since the borders are not discrete.

26. The /mūro/ construction is used because the speaker is narrating a story told to her. It does not convey doubt, but rather keeps the action within the appropriate frame. For Cindamani simply to say “the Kurumba came” would give the impression that the Kurumba has really just come.
27. Again, the narrative past/simple present creates tension as the Kurumba comes and throws a stone at Daḍuk. The sound Cindamani makes with her tongue in this context constitutes an implied prompt/question for the listener: “who did he throw a rock at”? “At Daḍuk elder brother,” she makes explicit.
28. Note change in subject: the implied subject of /itām/ is the Kurumba, “when the Kurumba threw.” The explicit subject of the next clause is Daḍuk. The “knot” evidently refers to the way in which Daḍuk wore his waistcloth (*muṇḍ*), tied with a knot, as opposed to merely tucked in.
29. The suffix -ār returns here to refer to the “area” around the “waist” /oṛkaṭ/. “Around and around” is indicated by the reduplicative form /oṛkaṭār oṛkaṭār/ combined with the verb “to circle,” /cut- (cuty-)/. The vowel lengthening in performance emphasizes the process of going around and around. That a knot could talk is indication of the power of the Kota, in this case to withstand the Kurumba attack. Other folktales involve inanimate objects or animals speaking to Kotas at critical moments.
30. My notes indicate that /entik/ means “near me,” /en/ (me) + /t/ (?) + /i/ (this place) + /k/ (to), but I probably misunderstood my assistant for this leaves the /t/ unaccounted for.

Most likely, the words mean “how here”: /ent/ (oblique form of “how”) + /i/ + /k/ (See Emeneau 1944-46, I: 24 §30). The sentence’s implication is the same, “how is it that you come here and make trouble”? The interrogative is marked by the word, “how” /ent-/, and the final raised intonation on /gicī/, simple present, second person singular of “to do.”

31. The “I” [āne] appears grammatically out of place here. /murnjkkō/ is a conjugation of the verb “be possible.” The (absent) agent for the action, the Kurumba, would be grammatically in the ablative (as in Tamil /muṭi-/), i.e. /kavɪ/ + /k/. The verb “be possible” is linked to the verb “to shake or move slightly” ackāṭ- (ackāc-) as follows: S¹ + /ɪ/ (gerund) + /k/ (in order to) = /ackāṭɪk/. “Me” /enne/ is marked as the further goal, the object of “move slightly.” This rhetorical question is marked as such by intonation and not by grammar.

/vāṛa pāklā/ is spoken Tamil: /vā/ = informal imperative, “come.” /ṛā/ = Tamil /ṛā/, a rude, or informal way of shouting out to a man. /pāklā/ = /pārkkalām/, “we shall see.” The change to Tamil here indicates the Kota is actually speaking to the Kurumba, who wouldn’t know the Kota language.

32. This final sentence is directed to the present writer, and is Kota mixed with Tamil. /ngo/ is a respectful suffix in Tamil.

References

- Emeneau, M. B. 1944-46. *Kota texts*. 4 Vols. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- . 1967. The South Dravidian Languages. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 67(4): 365-412.
- . 1969. Onomatopoeitics in the Indian linguistic area. *Language* 45(2), pt. 1: 274-99.
- . 1993. Tamil expressives with initial voiced stops. *Bulletin of the Oriental and African Studies, University of London*. vol. 56 pt. 1: 75-86.
- Subrahmanyam, P. S. 1991. Tense formation in Kota-Toda: A comparative study. In *Studies in Dravidian and General Linguistics: A Festschrift for Bh. Krishnamurti*, 49-72, ed. B. Lakshmi Bai and B. Ramakrishna Reddy. Hyderabad, India: Osmania University..

The extended vowel sounds on /anmē:::/ and /tēlā::r/ follow the contours described in line 13: the words begin slightly raised, descend in a shallow arc, and rise slightly at the end. Note the balance in sound in this sentence: two /adē/s, two /anmē/s, and two singsong vowel extensions. The distribution of these repeated features is such that each means something slightly different.

“That very Daḍuk-elder brother” may be emphasized because of the ambiguity of subject created in line 23, or perhaps simply because the speaker has demarcated the end of one section of the story and wants to make clear who the actor is in the next section. The use of the simple present/narrative past here, combined with the use of “that very buffalo” /adē im/ and “like that” /anmē/ (the first time) conveys the idea that shutting that particular buffalo in the pen is a habitual action, performed on this as any other day. The second /anmē/ could be translated as “in the manner of” [having performed these various chores]. Important is the “forest,” and not the “manner,” in this final phrase, since the forest is generally the site of Kurumba attacks.

The suffix /-ār/ refers to area or region. Rather than say “he reached the forest,” Kotas say “he reached the forest area,” perhaps since the borders are not discrete.

26. The /mūro/ construction is used because the speaker is narrating a story told to her. It does not convey doubt, but rather keeps the action within the appropriate frame. For Cindamani simply to say “the Kurumba came” would give the impression that the Kurumba has really just come.
27. Again, the narrative past/simple present creates tension as the Kurumba comes and throws a stone at Daḍuk. The sound Cindamani makes with her tongue in this context constitutes an implied prompt/question for the listener: “who did he throw a rock at”? “At Daḍuk elder brother,” she makes explicit.
28. Note change in subject: the implied subject of /iṭām/ is the Kurumba, “when the Kurumba threw.” The explicit subject of the next clause is Daḍuk. The “knot” evidently refers to the way in which Daḍuk wore his waistcloth (*mund*), tied with a knot, as opposed to merely tucked in.
29. The suffix -ār returns here to refer to the “area” around the “waist” /oṛkaṭ/. “Around and around” is indicated by the reduplicative form /oṛkaṭār oṛkaṭār/ combined with the verb “to circle,” /cut- (cuty-)/. The vowel lengthening in performance emphasizes the process of going around and around. That a knot could talk is indication of the power of the Kota, in this case to withstand the Kurumba attack. Other folktales involve inanimate objects or animals speaking to Kotas at critical moments.
30. My notes indicate that /entūk/ means “near me,” /en/ (me) + /t/ (?) + /ī/ (this place) + /k/ (to), but I probably misunderstood my assistant for this leaves the /t/ unaccounted for.

Most likely, the words mean “how here”: /ent/ (oblique form of “how”) + /ī/ + /k/ (See Emeneau 1944-46, I: 24 §30). The sentence’s implication is the same, “how is it that you come here and make trouble”? The interrogative is marked by the word, “how” /ent-/, and the final raised intonation on /gicī/, simple present, second person singular of “to do.”

31. The “I” [āne] appears grammatically out of place here. /muṇjkkō/ is a conjugation of the verb “be possible.” The (absent) agent for the action, the Kurumba, would be grammatically in the ablative (as in Tamil /muṭi-/), i.e. /kavṛ/ + /k/. The verb “be possible” is linked to the verb “to shake or move slightly” ackāṭ- (ackāc-) as follows: S¹ + /l/ (gerund) + /k/ (in order to) = /ackāṭṭk/. “Me” /enne/ is marked as the further goal, the object of “move slightly.” This rhetorical question is marked as such by intonation and not by grammar.

/vāṛa pāklā/ is spoken Tamil: /vā/ = informal imperative, “come.” /ṛā/ = Tamil /ṭā/, a rude, or informal way of shouting out to a man. /pāklā/ = /pārkkalām/, “we shall see.” The change to Tamil here indicates the Kota is actually speaking to the Kurumba, who wouldn’t know the Kota language.

32. This final sentence is directed to the present writer, and is Kota mixed with Tamil. /ngo/ is a respectful suffix in Tamil.

References

- Emeneau, M. B. 1944-46. *Kota texts*. 4 Vols. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- 1967. The South Dravidian Languages. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 67(4): 365-412.
- 1969. Onomatopoeitics in the Indian linguistic area. *Language* 45(2), pt. 1: 274-99.
- 1993. Tamil expressives with initial voiced stops. *Bulletin of the Oriental and African Studies, University of London*. vol. 56 pt. 1: 75-86.
- Subrahmanyam, P. S. 1991. Tense formation in Kota-Toda: A comparative study. In *Studies in Dravidian and General Linguistics: A Festschrift for Bh. Krishnamurti*, 49-72, ed. B. Lakshmi Bai and B. Ramakrishna Reddy. Hyderabad, India: Osmania University..

Kota language

Note: In the following, Kota verbs are presented in the following form:

S¹- (S²-) = future stem- (past/simple present stem-) in accordance with the Dravidian Etymological Dictionary

Identification

Kota belongs to the South Dravidian branch of the Dravidian language family, a branch which includes the major languages Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada. Kota and its closest neighbor, Toda, have been identified as a Nilgiri subgroup of the South Dravidian branch. Kota and Toda separated from the dominant language of the area (Pre-Tamil) sometime before the appearance of the first extant Tamil texts (about 2,000 years ago). The evidence rests primarily on a phonological shift, palatalization of *k- before front vowels, which eventually spread over the entire Tamil area. (The asterisk denotes what linguists believe formed part of proto-Dravidian. Palatalization means the place in which the consonant is articulated has shifted from the back of the throat to the roof of the mouth.) For example, in Tamil, the verb “to do,” *cey*, is believed to have evolved from **key*. In modern Kannada, *key*, *kai*, and *gey* are related terms. In Kota, the verb “to do” or “make” is *gey*- (*gec*-). (See DEDR 1957). The argument that Kota is more closely related to Tamil than to Kannada rests on the fact that Kota and Tamil have exclusive forms in common: a variant of the future suffix in Sangam Tamil (see Subrahmanyam 1991) and the prohibitive.

Local classification

Kotas term their language *Kō mānt* (Kota language), and *mānt* (our language) or more often simply *mānt* (language). *Mānt* also refers to parts of the language, such as a proverb, or even a single word or phrase, as in *mānūl mānt* (“traditional” word, usually one out of currency). Kotas refer to differences in dialect, usage, or vocabulary by region or age of speaker by the term *mānt* as well. *Kānmar mānt*, lit. “word change language,” refers to deliberate attempts by one group of language users to exclude others. Kotas will speak of someone next to them, say a Tamil who knows a few words in Kota, using *karg* or *ekl* (lit. “scratching”) as a term of reference—not without some humor. Some of these words enter and depart from the vocabulary with great frequency. In 1997, young men were calling alcoholic beverages “response tea” (*baḍḍi*). Older members of the community use this “word change language” to exclude youngsters in ways comparable to those of English-speaking parents when they spell words like “cookie” so as not to arouse the interest of a child.

Variations

Not surprisingly, each village has its own *mānt* as well. Kolmel *mānt* has been the standard for most linguistic work on the Kota language because it was the home of K. Sulli, M. B. Emeneau’s principal informant. The *mānt* spoken in Tigār village may be Badaga influenced in the prevalence of “v” in verbal forms where “v” would predominate in Kolmel *mānt*; this awaits systematic treatment. Similarly, the *mānts* of Kalāc and Kurgōj villages feature placement of a